
Public Safety Committee

HB 1713

Brief Description: Improving law enforcement response to missing and murdered Native American women.

Sponsors: Representatives Mosbrucker, Gregerson, Caldier, Dye, Barkis, Corry, Sells, Lekanoff, Schmick, Orwall, Chandler, Hudgins, Ryu, Frame, Jinkins, Ortiz-Self, Peterson, Stanford, Van Werven, Tarleton, Valdez, Macri, Pollet and Leavitt.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes two liaison positions within the Washington State Patrol for the purpose of building relationships between government and native communities.
- Establishes a Joint Legislative Task Force on Missing and Murdered Native American Women.

Hearing Date: 2/12/19

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit provides services for reporting and investigating missing persons. Such services include a 24-hour telephone service for reporting missing persons, poster distribution and research assistance to local law enforcement and family members, and coordination of investigative resources with state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies.

Pursuant to legislation enacted in 2018, the WSP is required to conduct a study on increasing state resources for reporting and identifying missing Native American women in the state. The WSP and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs must convene meetings with tribal and local law enforcement partners and work with federally recognized tribes in a government-to-government relationship to determine the scope of the problem, identify barriers, and explore

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ways of creating partnerships for improved reporting and investigation. The WSP also must work with the federal Department of Justice to increase information sharing and coordinate resources.

The WSP must report the results of the study to the Legislature by June 1, 2019. The study must include: data on the number of missing Native American women in the state; any barriers to providing more state resources to the issue of missing Native American women; and recommendations, including proposed legislation to address the problem.

Summary of Bill:

Two liaison positions for missing and murdered Native American women are established within the WSP. One liaison must reside in western Washington, and one liaison must reside in eastern Washington. To be eligible for hire as a liaison, an applicant must have significant experience living in tribal or urban Native American communities.

The liaisons must work to build relationships to increase trust between governmental organizations and native communities. Specifically, the liaisons must facilitate communications among:

- Indian tribes and tribal organizations and communities;
- urban Indian organizations and communities;
- tribal liaisons in other state agencies;
- law enforcement agencies at the federal, state, local, and tribal level; and
- nongovernmental entities that provide services to Native American women.

A Joint Legislative Task Force on Missing and Murdered Native American Women (task force) is established for the purpose of monitoring and improving law enforcement response to missing persons reports for Native American women. Members of the task force include:

- members from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate and the House of Representatives;
- two members representing families of missing and murdered Native American women, one from Western Washington and one from Eastern Washington;
- the Washington State Patrol;
- the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs;
- the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
- the Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs;
- the Seattle Police Department;
- the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians;
- a domestic violence advocacy group; and
- urban Indian organizations.

Co-chairs must be selected from the task force's Legislative members. The co-chairs may request two additional task force members.

The duties of the task force include, but are not limited to:

- developing a best practices protocol for law enforcement response to missing persons reports for Native American women. The protocol must include steps that law

enforcement should take upon receiving a missing persons report for a Native American woman;

- developing a tool kit for tribal and urban Indian communities to educate families about what steps they should take if a loved one is missing, including how to report a person missing and what other actions they should take to involve law enforcement;
- making recommendations to ensure that state and local jurisdictions are sharing information in response to missing persons reports for Native American women in ways already provided under state and federal law;
- raising the public's awareness of the state and national crisis of missing and murdered Native American women;
- building relationships to increase trust between governmental organizations and native organizations and communities to help facilitate the response to missing persons reports for Native American women;
- recommending ways that the state can provide support to the families of missing and murdered Native American women, with special consideration to the ways in which needs may differ between urban and tribal communities; and
- developing a database of nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations that provide aid or support in locating missing Native American women.

The first meeting of the task force must occur prior to October 1, 2019, and the task force must meet at least quarterly. No later than December 1, 2019, the task force must submit a preliminary report of its initial findings and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the Legislature and to the Governor, along with the best practices protocol and database. The task force must report its final findings and recommendations by June 30, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2019.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.